(c) whether Government have taken any action to probe the matter through Indian Embassy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Shri Prabir Ghoshal, a crew member of the ocean liner QE2 reportedly went missing on July 23, 2001. The High Commission of India, London sought a full report on the incident from the British Maritime and Coast Guard Agency which informed that they had undertaken a search and rescue operation. However, the search had to be called off after a reasonable amount of time had lapsed and the authorities are now awaiting information on the sighting/ location of the body of late Shri Prabir Ghoshal prior to concluding the death enquiry.

Relationship between Gujarat and New Jersey (USA)

3420. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any request from the Government of Gujarat for clearance of Sister State Relationship between Gujarat and New Jersey USA in the areas of Economic Development, Scientific Research, Tourism and Culture;

(b) if so, the action taken by Government in this regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Opening of UAE Consulate in Southern India

3421. SHRI P.N. SIVA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any request has been made to the Government of UAE to open its Consulate in Southern India;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the present status thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Not applicable.

Indo-Nepal Bilateral and Diplomatic Relations

†3422. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any survey with regard to bilateral and diplomatic relations between India and Nepal;

(b) if so, the efforts Government have made with regard to the dispute and misunderstanding developed after the incidence of Hrithik Roshan's statement;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) how much importance is being given to the Nepal Government's reaction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) In the last week of December, 2001 demonstrations were held in Kathmandu and other places of Nepal protesting against a fabricated rumour concerning anti-Nepal remarks purported to have been made by Indian film star Hrithik Roshan. The rumour was without any foundation whatsoever and was denied by Mr Roshan. The demonstrations took on an anti-India colour and resulted in damage to the property of people of Indian origin in Nepal. The matter relating to safety and security of Indian nationals and property in Nepal was immediately taken up with His Majesty's Government of Nepal by Prime Minister with then Prime Minister Koirala of Nepal. His Majesty's Government of Nepal assured that necessary steps were being taken. A Commission of Inquiry was set up by His Majesty's Government of Nepal for investigating these incidents.

(d) India-Nepal Foreign Secretary level talks were held in Delhi on January 30 and 31, 2001. The issue came up for discussion during these talks and the concern of the Government of India was reiterated to the Nepalese side. Both Sides agreed on the need to ensure that such incidents do not recur in future.